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ABSTRACT

This paper describes outdoor learning programs in New Zealand. Among those serving the nation as a whole are the: (1) Cobham Outward Bound School; (2) Outdoor Pursuits Centre, which provides outdoor technical skills training for schools and professional outdoor courses for leaders and teachers; and (3) Spirit of Adventure Trust, which teaches sailing and navigation skills on two tall ships to students from all New Zealand high schools. Two regionally based programs with markedly different clients and foci are the: (1) Northern Wilderness Experience, which has succeeded in balancing outdoor challenge with counseling and family therapy to rehabilitate troubled youth of Maori and Pacific Island descent; and (2) Tihoi Venture School, which provides a demanding 6-month experience for 14- and 15-year-old boys from an expensive private school. Most schools offer Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) opportunities. Elementary school EOTC activities are usually cross curriculum or integrated activities on the school grounds or at nearby outdoor facilities. Secondary school activities tend to focus on technical outdoor skills, often at school-owned camps or independent outdoor centers. Most New Zealand outdoor educators are white males with highly developed technical skills; few have graduate education qualifications. Introductory training programs are widely available, but opportunities for advanced professional development are limited. The New Zealand Outdoor Instructors Association aims to develop a comprehensive certification scheme for outdoor instructors. The national Ministry of Education oversees safety standards for EOTC programs. (SV)

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EXPLORING DIVERSITY IN LANDSCAPES AND LEARNINGSCAPES IN AOTEAROA

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EXPLORING DIVERSITY IN LANDSCAPES AND LEARNINGSCAPES IN AOTEAROA

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou, katoa.

As is increasing the practice in our country Aotearoa (New Zealand), we greet this house and all in it. We recognise it as a place of learning. We greet all those who have preceded us, and all those who will follow us. We greet the mountains, canyons and desert and celebrate the beauty and spirit of the land around us here. Finally we greet you all as people of this land, and welcome you to this sharing of the diverse landscapes and learningscapes of Aotearoa.

I am Marg Cosgriff. I currently live in Whanga-nui a Tara, Wellington City, the capital of Aotearoa. My roots are in Rotorua in the central North Island and I look to Taravera my mountain and Rangitaiki my river for strength and solace. I am reminded of the cultural and environmental richness of my area of birth.

I am Ross Merrett. I also live in Whanga-nui a Tara, although my roots lie north in Tamaki or Auckland. I associate strongly with the wind and water of the Hauraki Gulf. I look north to the volcanic plateau and the mountains of Tongariro, Nqarahoe and Ruapehm for strength.

I am Martha Bell. I live at Anakina in the cool, green bush by the seas of Totaranui, Queen Charlotte Sound, in Te Waiponnamu, the South Island. I look to Tapuae-o-unuku as my mountain. I also carry with me the memory of the fresh waters and sunbleached rock and windswept white pine of my childhood in Ontario.

Our respective professions involve us sharing the outdoors with a range of people. As outdoor educators, our endeavours are shaped by the offerings of our environment. In turn, our efforts have impact on the land. It is important to each of us to acknowledge this two way interconnectedness of land and learning before we begin.

Aotearoa; New Zealand; "down under"; Kiwiland; Nuke Free Pacific ... the land of mountains, bush, sea and the long white cloud. A land of supposedly easygoing, 'down to earth' people living in a slow paced natural wilderness ... the impressions are many and varied. Our nation is a young one - with a heritage 2000 years of Maori culture and a mere 150 years of European settlement. Situated in the South of the Pacific, distant from other land masses (we're not an appendage of Australia as some seem to think!), our patterns of development are both distinctive and unique. With a spectacular backdrop of alps, waterways, desert, volcanoes, exotic bush and wildlife, our country has managed to maintain one foot in the door of global politics while enjoying the relative freedom our location affords.

Before continuing our exploration of outdoor learning in Aotearoa, we first acknowledge the influence of these factors of location, natural resources and the outdoor ethic many people subscribe to.

Our size and relative isolation means that we can speak with a sense of definitiveness on the opportunities for outdoor learning which are available. We have the luxury of being able to share a national view of developments and programmes.

Our proximity to waterways, mountains and bush provides outdoor centres and outdoor programmes with a great deal of freedom in their selection of course activities and environments to operate in. That no part of the country is more than 110km from the sea highlights the reality of this access!

Whilst Maori and Pakeha may journey into the bush and to the sea for different reasons, both cultural groups have strong connections with the land. Historically, the Maori people were entirely dependent on the immediate environment for their survival, and they had a profound understanding of the

resources it offered them. Intellectually and emotionally their relationship was equally close. "It shaped the very processes of thought, it lead to the development of ideas explaining the origin and nature of the world, and since affinities were felt to exist between all living things, it was a source of images that were applied to human beings." (Orbell, M. **The Natural World of the Maori**, 1985:15)

Much of the spirit of this thought still survives. Maoris see in the land the "presence of their ancestors, the continuity of past and present, and they know the land and its people to be inseparable." (Orbell; 15)

For the Pakeha or New Zealanders, the land is a source of recreation, food, adventure and for some - lifestyle. Whilst recognition of the spiritual and ancestral links with the land are less obvious, many Pakehas engage in activities which involve journeying on the land and sharing her resources. It would be hard to find elsewhere on the globe, a nation of 3.3 million people; the majority for whom summer is synonymous with the barbie, the bush, the beach and yes .... the beer.

Our exploration of centres and programmes begins with three, which enjoy wide public and media recognition in Aotearoa and service the nation as a whole (as distinct from catering specifically for local needs).

Situated in the Marlborough Sounds at the top of the South Island, the Cobham Outward Bound School at Anakiwa celebrated its 25th birthday in 1987. The only Outward Bound School in the country is administered by a Wellington based trust and supported and promoted by regional groups of ex-students and friends called "Bounders". The school offers both standard 24 days courses for individuals between 18 and 27 years and 9 day courses for those over 27 years and for special needs groups. With immediate access to the waterways of the Marlborough Sounds, local rivers, bush and small communities, courses are a smorgasboard of outdoor activities. Each course, irrespective of length includes kayaking, tramping, rock climbing, cutter sailing, solo, community service and the inevitable PTs! The Hahnian philosopohy of striving without yielding is alive and well at the centre - PT and the early morning swim starts at 6.00 am, and the physical demands placed on students are extensive. In most cases, there is also time devoted to personal and group reflection. The extent of debriefing and structured group building which occurs is largely dependent on the commitment and skills of individual instructors. As the Outward Bound School moves into the new decade its focus is expanding for both economic and needs based reasons. Mobile courses based in the outer sounds, a vastly increased number of special needs programmes and closer links with teacher training, all reflect the School's commitment to taking proactive steps in the face of change.

Tawhitikuri or the Outdoor Pursuits Centre as it is more widely known, is the primary supplier of technical skills training in the country. Nestled in the richly resourced central North Island plateau, the centre offers five day

general activities courses for schools which basically are its 'bread and butter'. Skills courses in the mountains, the bush and on rivers, personal development courses and general activities courses for adults greatly enrich OPC's programme. For the past 17 years, the centre has been one of the primary sources of professional outdoor courses for leaders and teachers, and its 10 week "Outdoor Educators" course is a recognised and respected means of gaining outdoor skills and leadership experience. Irrespective of the nature of the course, OPC aims to equally foster group interaction and outdoor skills, with "giving things a go" a top priority for all involved.

The Spirit of Adventure Trust situated in Auckland, administers two tallships - the Spirit of Adventure and the Spirit of New Zealand. As their brochure outlines, they "aim to offer equal opportunity to young New Zealanders to develop the qualities of independence and community spirit through the medium of the sea." Ten day voyages in the waterways and along the coasts of both the North and South Island run virtually the whole year around. Trainees experientially learning the skills of sailing and navigation. With the grand finale of "student day" with trainees completely responsible for the sailing of the ship, watches discover quickly the need for clear communication and co-operative group efforts.

The Spirit Trust believes that the potential learning for trainees is enriched by ensuring that the composition of watches is diverse. Both rural and urban, and state and private high schools are therefore allocated a set number of berths each year for students between 15 and 19 years.

Whilst Outward Bound, Outdoor Pursuits Centre and the Spirit of Adventure service the whole country, there are a number of more regionally based centres and programmes which have a marked impact on both their local communities and the outdoor field nationally. We have chosen to highlight two such centres

in this presentation - they represent polar ends of the spectrum in terms of client groups, funding and focus, yet both share the common ground of experiential learning and personal development through challenge in the outdoors.

Northern Wilderness Experience is located in Taitokerau or Northland, the northern most region of Aotearoa. This region is typified by high youth unemployment, homelessness, vandalism and drug abuse. The traditional methods of 'treatment' - prisons and periodic detention - have had limited success. Northland W.E. was established by Presbyterian Social Support with government funding, in 1985, in response to the obvious need for an alternative and more effective solution to the social problems the region was experiencing. The programme's guiding principles is "providing troubled young people with the opportunity to make positive changes in their lives by helping them to learn how to take control of their own destinies and to lead rewarding lives independent of welfare agencies." Whilst this is a theme echoed in other schemes which use the outdoors therapeutically, NWE from its inception has had to prove the effectiveness of the programme in terms of both financial viability and the heightened self esteem of the clients. The future funding of few outdoor programmes in the country depends so directly on quantitative research findings. This point, plus the fact that approximately 80% of clients are of Maori or Pacific Island descent, has had an enormous impact on the programmes developed. Be it in pre-course activities, the 10 day tramping expeditions or during the 18 month follow up period, the development of technical outdoor skills and of interpersonal skills is equally emphasised. The whanau or family group are encouraged to be involved through family therapy sessions. At the programme's core is the belief that Maori and Pacific Island people have a greater awareness of the value of families and spiritualism in their lives, and thus a totally task orientated programme would not effectively meet their needs. The balance of challenge in the outdoors and counselling and family therapy is the key to the programme's success.

In direct contrast to Northern Wilderness Experience is Tihoi Venture School, which becomes home to fifty 14 and 15 year old boys for six months of the year. Students from an expensive, single sex private school, the boys leave the familiarity of home comforts and a nine to three school day to learn self reliance, co-operation and outdoor skills. Tihoi is located in an isolated valley in the Central North Island, a particularly bleak and damp place in winter. This impression of bleakness is only intensified by the bare houses in which groups of boys sleep, cook and clean to a standard adequate to pass the regular staff inspections. Tihoi is not a place for comfortable chairs and flash ghetto blasters, for initiative and positive interdependence amongst group members is not seen to be fostered by such possessions. The Centre runs normal school lessons for four days of each week, with outdoor activities, skills sessions and expeditions filling the remaining time. Instructing staff recall that life isn't easy for the students during their time at Tihoi;-but it isn't meant to be either. Challenge and effort are applauded, and a sense of responsibility to the group fostered by ensuring all group members lose privileges for any one individual's indiscretions. We might add at this point, doors and lightbulbs are known to be included in the privileges list at Tihoi!

We now wish to draw back from focusing on specific programmes and dwell for a moment on a more general picture of educational, non profit outdoor programmes in Aotearoa. We have gathered over the past few days to acknowledge and celebrate diversity in all its forms. The richness this celebration exposes is overwhelming. However, when we consider our 'home turf' we note that in many cases our celebration seems to stop short of the programmes and staffing. Providing full opinions on why this is so, would probably fill another session (!) therefore at this point we just wish to share our perspectives with each of you.

Few outdoor centres and programmes in Aotearoa celebrate diversity in the gender balance of their staffs, - the administrators, directors and instructors. It is accurate to note both in the past and currently, our centres and programmes are largely run, and fronted, by men. When Karen Warren spoke of the "myth of accessibility" in the AEE Journal in 1985, she referred to the misconception that outdoor experiences are widely available to women. Social conditioning, a lack of past adventure experiences to prompt and support involvement, and economic inequity were highlighted by Warren as strong reasons why this was in fact not the case. In reflecting on the lack of women instructing in the outdoors in Aotearoa we draw parallels with Warren's myth of accessibility. We suggest that the failure of employers to fully acknowledge the impact of factors such as social conditioning and reduced accessibility to adventure experiences, and to fully value people skills as well as techincal skills alters womens' accessibility to outdoor instructing jobs. Outdoor leaders and administrators committed to gender equity in staffing need to take affirmative steps to support women interested in the field and importantly, to nurture those few already working there.

Diversity is similarly not reflected in the cultural backgrounds of staff in our outdoor centres and in leadership roles in the field. We acknowledge that a profession in the outdoors field is not something everyone, irrespective of their cultural background, aspires to. Our centres are predominantly monocultural institutions in structure, mission statements and programming. Exceptions such as Northern Wilderness Experience and the Ngati Parou and Arapaepae outdoor centres do exist, however they are a minority. As with accessibility for women wishing to enter the field, the challenge lies with each of us and our centres to examine philosophy and practise and evaluate whether biculturalism and partnership are indeed reflected and modelled.

No canvas depicting the diversity of learningscapes in Aotearoa would be complete without the inclusion of Education Outside the Classroom opportunities in schools. History tells us that groups of children have been learning in the outdoors for approximately 80 years. In our country over the past 25, the impetus for EOTC as it is commonly called, has dramatically increased, as is witnessed by the proliferation of both school based and field based experiences. Our primary schools (which cater for children from the ages of 5 to approximately 12 years) generally utilise their immediate school grounds, local environment or accessible outdoor facilities for EOTC opportunities. Cross curriculum or integrated activities are common, with introductory outdoor pursuits balanced with art and craft, music, language and other curriculum areas. The emphasis is on the positive first experience, the creation of feelings of comfort in a different environment (and a different bed!), the enrichening of classroom studies and of social relationships.

As we move into secondary or high schools, the focus subtly changes. EOTC programmes or outdoor education are primarily pursuits based, often balanced with a blend of group building, initiative and challenge activities. Cross curriculum experiences are less frequent; - it would appear, that teachers see the outdoor education experience more a time to develop technical outdoor skills; leaving independent geography, biology and science field trips to integrate environmental concepts. Secondary schools generally have three options in terms of where they locate their outdoor education programmes. A number of schools hire buildings or centres from outside agencies such as church groups. Some schools either independently or in conjunction with other local schools own their own centres. Either of these two options require the particular school involved, to staff the activities, and effectively to run the camp. The third option which a number of schools enjoy, is contributing to a centre which is permanently staffed by experienced outdoor instructors.

These resident teachers as they are called, organise the programmes in response to staff requests, lead activities and generally facilitate the camp experience. Two such centres are Castle Hill Outdoor Centre in the central South Island and The Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits and Educational Centre Trust in the North Island.

So, who are these Kiwi outdoor educators?

How do we professionally enrich our skills?

Who oversees our safety standards?

Do we network with our peers?

What's our professional preparation and training for the field?

The 'typical' Kiwi outdoor educator or instructor defies description - despite the fact that only about 80 are employed full time in the field. Walking advertisements for fibropile, goretex and polypropelene; apt to own a range of expensive outdoor 'toys' and likely to spend spare time recreating in their place of work, - most are practitioners. There is a distinct lack of graduate and post graduate outdoor education qualifications in Aotearoa. For some, there is no reason for there to be any - talk, 'philosophising' and research somehow don't relate to 'doing it'. Technical skills are highly valued. The breadth and depth of these is what generally distinguishes between those working full time in the field, and teachers periodically involved in EOTC programmes with their school students.

Safety is a central concern for all irrespective of workplace. Legal liability is not the issue for those in the field in Aotearoa rather that it is for each of you. For better or for worse, the advent of the Accident Compensation Legislation in 1972 abolished common law compensation for personal injury due to accident. The Accident Compensation Corporation, though currently under review, has traditionally provided for all who suffer injury or loss in our programmes. Consideration of where and when the accident occurred, its causation and the degree of negligence involved are not relevant in relation to compensation. In terms of legal liability, no action for personal injury resulting from accident lies against any controlling authority, instructor and teacher.

Before you conjure up visions of slap happy Kiwis wildly leading trips into unmapped territory under the benevolent eyes of a guardian angel called ACC, we would like to point out that there are established standards of practices operating in the education area. The Department or Ministry of Education is the national government ministry responsible for education. During the late seventies, the Department was prompted by those working in the field to take a more direct leadership role in the provision of guidelines for Education Outside the Classroom in schools. After wide consultation, an "EOTC Policy Statement" and a "Principals' Guide to EOTC" were developed in 1986 and 1987. This finally provided our schools with an identifiable foundation for safe practises, teacher training and programme development in EOTC. Supported by the monitoring of individual school management committees, a benchmark for programme standards in outdoor learning has been established.

Outside the context of schools, outdoor centres like those we have highlighted are self monitoring of safety standards and codes of practice.

For instructors and teachers wishing to update their skills and experience, training opportunities are slowly increasing. The needs of those who work at a more introductory level are well met through programmes at the Colleges of Education - our teacher training institutions - and centres like OPC. For those highly skilled in technical areas or in group process, professional development opportunities are more limited. Many instructors specifically travel overseas to other centres, courses and workshops to enrich their experiences and skills. It is interesting to note the increasing influence in the past few years of North American initiatives such as Project Adventure, and Earth Education, and the growing number of people subscribing to North American journals and newsletters. Blended with Kiwi ingenuity and adapted to meet our local needs, the impact of this information on programme development is becoming significant.

Before we invite you all to question and delve, we will briefly highlight two professional associations which support, challenge and at times, even frustrate us! The New Zealand Outdoor Instructors Association was formed two years ago. Based on the British model, the Association's primary aim was to establish a certification scheme for outdoor instructors. Embraced by some and vehemently opposed by others, such a scheme has been developed in all major outdoor pursuits activities, and assessment courses are being run on a semi-regular basis. Two years down the track though, NZOIA is having to closely consider its role and functions. Limited numbers have been seeking assessment, and the requests for training from many of the 100 members are suggesting an altered focus. The desire to improve on people skills is widespread, and it is significant that workshops on conflict resolution and processing are balancing the programme at the national conference being held currently at home. We believe that NZOIA's ability to meet these needs even if different from the original stated objectives, will largely determine the growth and future of the Association.

Women Outdoors New Zealand supports and nurtures both women working in the field in Aotearoa, and those wishing to share outdoor activities with other women. Founded on a principle of powersharing and networking, the group has experienced wide support from Pakeha women in its first year of existence. Strong regional groups of WONZ women meet local needs and activities and initiatives occur on a regular basis.

Our presentation has been a mere glimpse of the learning and landscapes in Aotearoa, no amount of talking can adequately capture the richness which exists in both. We conclude today by leaving some final impressions and reflections with you .....